



**Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief at
Southsea Castle, Clarence Esplanade, Southsea, Hampshire**

February 2021

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This document sets out the results from an archaeological watching brief undertaken during the refurbishment of the West Bailey toilets at Southsea Castle, Portsmouth. The watching brief was carried out on the 25th January 2021 by West Sussex Archaeology Ltd on behalf of Portsmouth City Council.

The results revealed two sections of the outer face of the north wall of the Tudor castle, together with stone wall footings and brick sleeper walls associated with two early 19th century casements.

BACKGROUND

Topographical Background

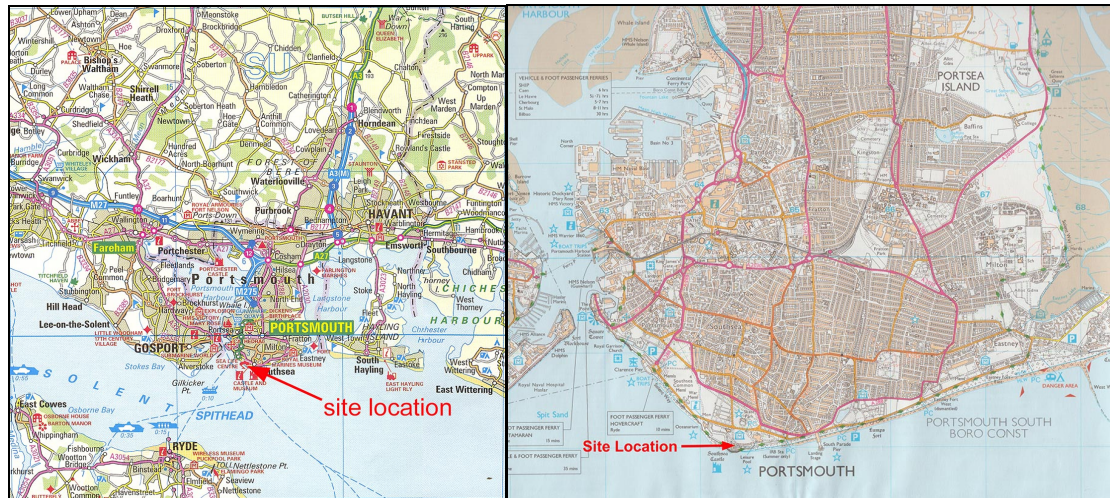


Figure 1 Site location. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License number: AL100036068

1. Southsea Castle is situated on the foreshore, c.200m to the south of Clarence Esplanade in Southsea, Hampshire, overlooking the entrance to Portsmouth Harbour on its eastern side (see Fig.1). It lies at 3m aOD and is centred at OS grid reference SZ 6434 9802. The underlying geology is the Earnley Sand Formation And Marsh Farm Formation overlain by the gravels of the Storm Beach Deposits.

Project Background

1. Portsmouth City Council (PCC) have been given Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) (SMC No.S00210224) from Historic England (HE) for the refurbishment of the West Bailey toilets at Southsea Castle. Condition (e) of that consent requires that a WSI for an archaeological watching brief be submitted to and approved by HE. West Sussex Archaeology Ltd (WSA) was appointed by PCC to carry out the archaeological watching brief required by this condition. To that end a specification was drawn up by WSA, which set out the methodology to be used (WSA 2021), and which was approved by Alex Belisario (Historic England).
2. This report details the results of that archaeological work, which was carried out on 25th January 2021. The project archive, which consists solely of paperwork, will be deposited with Portsmouth Museum (Accession No. 2021/3).

Historical Background

1. Southsea Castle is a Scheduled Monument (SM No.PO259/1001869). The castle was originally constructed in 1544 to protect the neighbouring harbour of Portsmouth, but has undergone a number of significant alterations subsequently, most notably in the early 19th century. Today it comprises a large square keep, east and west baileys, with casements and magazines around the perimeter, all of which is surrounded by a curtain wall with a dry moat and counterscarp gallery. The Castle was decommissioned in 1960 and sold to Portsmouth City Council.

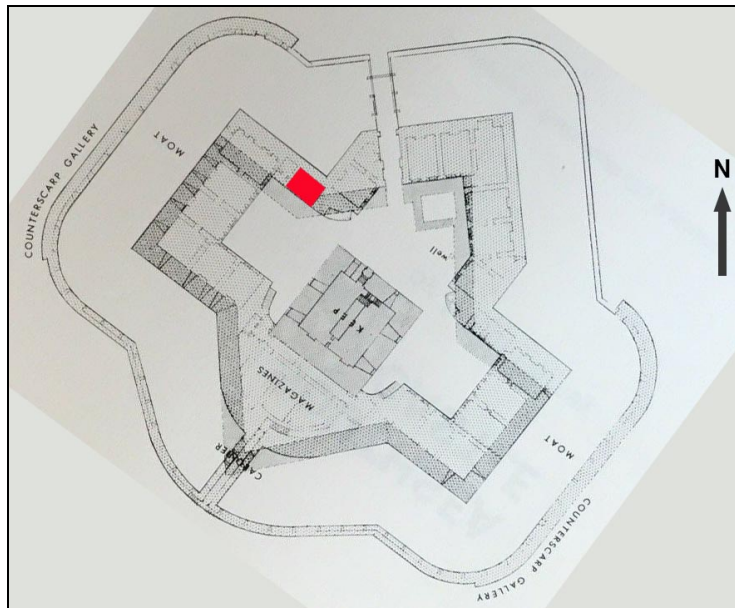


Figure 2 Plan from Corney's guide to Southsea Castle (Corney 1968), showing the location of the toilets (in red) and the Tudor fortifications (in dark grey)



Figure 3 1834 plan of Southsea Castle showing the area of the toilets shaded in red

2. The West Bailey toilets are located within two of the casements on its north-eastern side, constructed c.1813, and labelled on a plan of 1834 as “canteen” and “cleaning room” (see Figure 3). The outer wall of the original 16th century fort lies immediately to the south of these casements, under the West Bailey (see Figure 2). During refurbishment works in 1963 the line of these fortifications was revealed and marked by the existing stone setts (Brooks, p.20 & Scarrow, p.14-5).

RESULTS

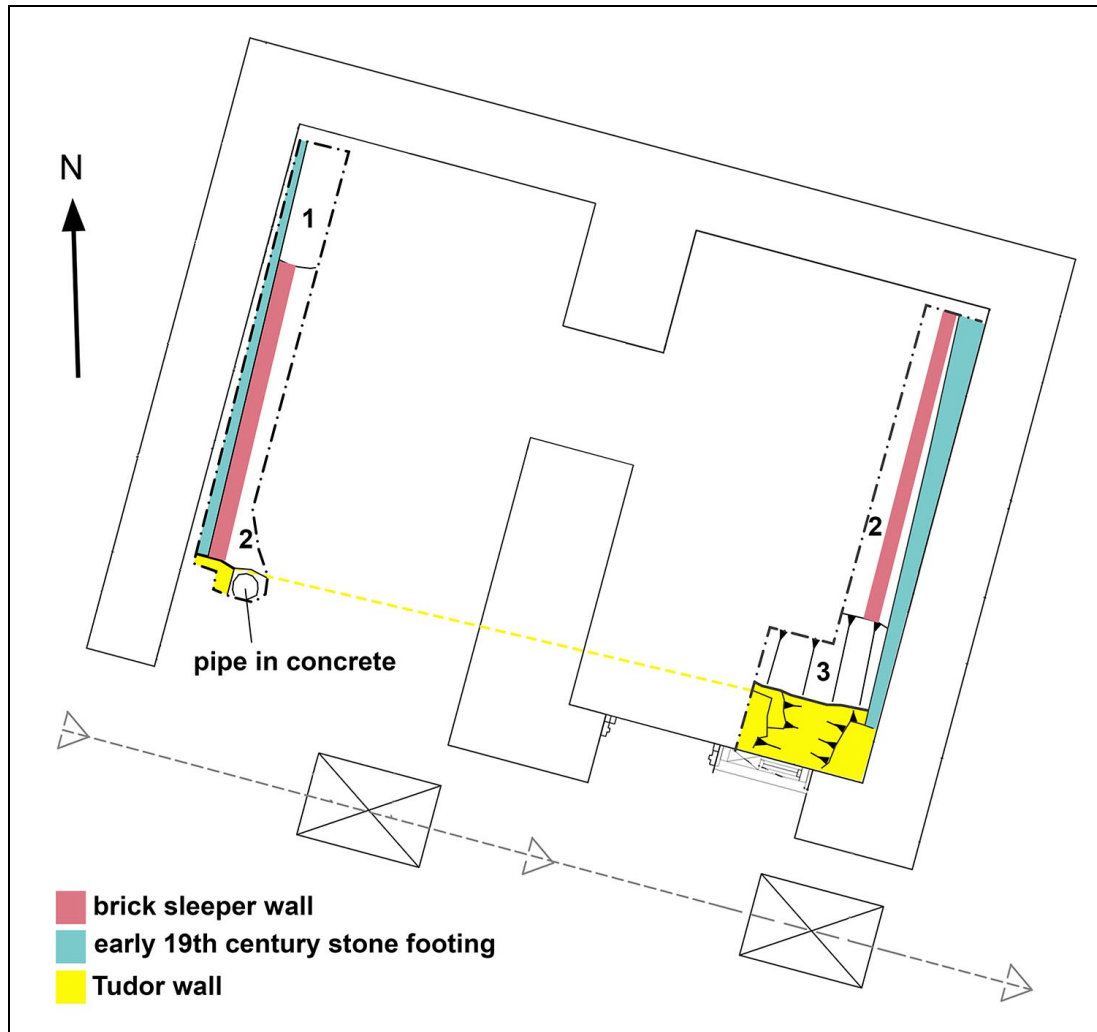


Figure 4 Plan of the two trenches and their features

1. Two trenches were excavated, one in each casement, to enable the proposed new toilets to be connected to existing sewer pipes under the casements' south-west walls. In both trenches the north-eastern edge of the Tudor castle's outer wall was revealed under the modern floor, at a depth of 0.25m in the western trench and 0.3m in the eastern. Both walls had previously been punctured for soil pipes, presumably in 1963. The new western pipe was able to be connected into the existing 1960's pipe where it exited the Tudor wall in the casement, therefore

WEST SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGY

little of the wall was exposed in this location. In the eastern trench, the existing 1960's pipe had to be cut back in order to make a secure connection, resulting in the emptying of part of its trench and the exposure of more of the Tudor wall. The Tudor wall was found to be composed of undressed stone blocks bonded in a white mortar. Traces of a hard grey mortar render were found at its extreme eastern end, at which point it appeared to be turning to the north-east, which would fit with Corney's reconstruction (see Figure 3).



Figure 5 The Tudor wall as seen in the eastern trench (left) and western trench (right), both looking south-west



Figure 6 The early 19th century stone wall (behind the scale) and brick sleeper wall (under the scale) in the western trench, looking north-west

2. Butted up against the Tudor wall in both trenches was a footing running at right angles to it to the north-east, and lying 0.25m below the existing floor in the western trench, and 0.2m below in the eastern trench. This was composed of dressed stone blocks, possibly robbed from the facing stones of the Tudor castle. The footing supported the brick casement walls above, and is assumed therefore to belong to the early 19th century re-modelling of the castle. The base of these footings exceeded 0.9m below the current floor level in the eastern trench, where it was excavated to a greater depth to facilitate the required pipe connection.
3. Running parallel to these stone footings were brick sleeper walls, two courses deep, 0.3m below current floor level in the western trench and 0.36 below in the eastern. It is assumed that these once supported a suspended timber floor in each casement. At the south-western end of the eastern trench, where the overlying layers of dirty gravel (2) and soil & rubble (1 – the base for the modern concrete and tile floor) were removed, it was possible to see that the brick sleeper wall was bedded on a deposit of clean gravel (3). The latter extended below the base of the trench, but neither the Tudor wall, nor the early 19th century footings, were dug through it. It is assumed, therefore, that this gravel was used to infill the space between these enclosing walls. If, as seems likely, the ditch of the Tudor castle lay immediately outside its outer wall, then it would need to have been infilled as part of the works associated with its enlargement in the early 19th century, and this gravel may well have performed this role. The depth of the stone footings to the casement walls, and the fact that they do not cut this gravel deposit, might suggest that they were built up from the base of the ditch before the gravel was laid down.

CONCLUSION

1. While of very limited scale, this watching brief carried out during the laying of two new foul water pipes has produced some useful results. It has fixed the line of the outer face of the Tudor castle wall, which is shown to be approximately where Corney predicted it back in the 1960's, and it has provided some further evidence for how the castle was extended in the early 19th century; the results suggesting that the latter's walls may have been built up from the base of the Tudor ditch, with the spaces inside infilled with gravel up to the level of the brick sleeper walls of their suspended timber floors.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brooks, S. 1996. **Southsea Castle** Pitkin Guides

Corney, A. 1968. **Southsea Castle**. Portsmouth City Museum

Scarrow, D. 2007. **Essay on Southsea Castle**. Unpublished MSc thesis for the School of Environmental Design & Management, University of Portsmouth

West Sussex Archaeology Ltd 2021 **Written Scheme of Investigation for a Programme of Archaeological Works at Southsea Castle, Clarence Esplanade, Southsea, Hampshire**. Unpublished